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**Andriotis, K. (2011). Genres of Heritage Authenticity: Denotations from a Pilgrimage Landscape. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 38(4): 1613-1633.**

**Abstract**

Whilst several tourism scholars have deconstructed the notion of authenticity on heritage environments either from a theoretical or empirical perspective, few, if any, have undertaken a close look at Pine & Gilmore's (2007) genres of authenticity, namely natural, original, exceptional, referential, and influential. It is the aim of this study to overcome past research negligence by rendering the appeal of the five genres of authenticity in the case of Mount Athos, a pilgrimage landscape located in northern Greece, which can be considered as the last surviving byzantine complex of monasteries. Based on the findings of the study, this paper links the five genres of authenticity with past research on pilgrimage experience.

**Keywords:** genres of authenticity; religious heritage experience; pilgrimage landscape; Christian Orthodoxy.

**INTRODUCTION**

Since the 1970s that MacCannell (1973) introduced the concept of authenticity to sociological studies, scholars' interest on authenticity has been interpreted by proceeding to a diverse debate to the use of the concept, often adopting seemingly contradictory terms, such as staged vs. true authenticity (MacCannell, 1973); cool vs. hot authenticity (Selwyn, 1996); indexical vs. iconic authenticity (Grayson & Martinec, 2004); and inauthenticity of front regions vs. authenticity of back regions (Goffman, 1959; MacCannell, 1973). While these diverse discussions can be grouped into two mainstream categories of authenticity, namely fake vs. real, they have directed some authors (e.g. Bruner, 1994) to conclude that authenticity is a very elusive concept that has multiple meaning with both demand and supply side connotations. Today, the concept of authenticity resumes a central role in many heritage studies with most discussion focusing on whether authenticity draws spending from those travelers wishing to experience the past (Waite, 2000), or whether it offers a sense of identity, and anchors collective memories by providing tangible links between past, present and future (Millar, 1989, p.9). Hence, both consumer and sociological research, can provide an appropriate theoretical and empirical base for further research and can offer potential explanations for the ways that the concept of authenticity can be used in the case of a pilgrimage landscape, defined as a "geographic area (including both cultural and natural resources) associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values" (Birnbaum & Peters, 1996, p.4).

Based on the aforementioned definition it is apparent that a pilgrimage landscape, as an experiential cultural space, involves a complex of elements. Rapoport (1984) distinguished three types of separate or connected material elements of built environment: the fixed, human-made, such as buildings which rarely and slowly change; the semi-fixed, such as furniture, utensils and plants which can be changed fairly quickly and easily; and the non-fixed, composed of the human occupants or inhabitants of the

setting which can be influenced in line with the societal values, and the activities and uses of a site. In the context of religious sites, Nuryanti (1996, p.252) identified an interaction between three elements: the fixed physical, such as relics, ranging from holy wells to modern religious buildings; scientific heritage, encompassing natural elements, such as plants, birds, animals, rocks and habitats; and cultural heritage covering folk and fine arts, customs and languages. On the other hand, conservationists' discussion on world heritage authenticity (e.g. Stovel, 2008), has focused on tangible/material elements (setting, structure, form, techniques and surface) and intangible/non material elements (function, use, tradition, workmanship and spirit). Finally, from a tourism perspective, Waitt (2000, p.837) suggested that tourists seek three types of quality to authenticate the past: artefacts (clothes, tools and place of work, and abode); mentefacts (art, dance, religion, and stories) and sociofacts (meeting and reminiscing with locals).

The diverse elements of heritage sites identified in the literature represent a useful device for the study of authenticity. Although the search for authenticity is one of the cornerstones of contemporary heritage research, yet confusion surrounds the nature and use of the concept. An examination of research approaches in the study of heritage authenticity reveals that most studies heavily concentrate around two main poles. On the theoretical side, among the studies attempting a conceptual clarification of authenticity two different concepts become apparent. From the supply perspective, research has been focused on object authenticity, defined by Wang (1999, p.351) as authenticity of originals, which is concerned on whether toured objects are historically accurate or not, and is equated with terms, such as accurate, genuine, or true. From the demand perspective, authenticity has been seen as existential experiences derived from the consumption of interaction of the visitor with heritage resources (Moscardo, 2001, p.5; Wang, 1999). On the empirical side, studies on heritage authenticity provide case-based evidence without always situating themselves within any framework/theory, although they often provide some theoretical underpinnings. These case-based studies either use observational and/or secondary data to identify the mediating role heritage environments play in shaping authenticity (e.g. Bruner, 1994, 2001; DeLyser, 1999), or scholarly explain the way visitors define and/or perceive authenticity (for example see Cohen, 1988; Waitt, 2000).

Despite the increasing use of the concept of authenticity in tourism studies, Lau (2010) identified a failure of past research to realize that the word has specific senses which pertain among others to relationship, object and original authenticity. Although it is not within the scope of this study to review these senses, it is evident that a review of published research on authenticity presents various limitations. First, the existing literature does not adopt a holistic approach and fails to adopt an interdisciplinary perspective in the exploration of the influence of various elements in the study of heritage authenticity. Thus, the authenticity of the heritage landscape which includes buildings, material objects for exhibition or sale, natural environments, history and indigenous people, has not been widely examined. Whilst previous research efforts have examined the tourism experience within a range of constructed heritage settings, the contribution of consumer research has not been systematically explored within pilgrimage landscapes. This area of neglect requires attention, as certain supply elements of authenticity identified on consumer research can be important resources to the experience of heritage landscapes. A second limitation is the commercialization of the cases drawn upon. Most

past studies on authenticity are limited to congested sites within a range of constructed heritage settings, such as museums and archaeological sites/objects (Goulding, 2000); heritage/historic sites and theme parks (Barthel, 1996; Bruner, 1994; DeLyser, 1999); or non tangible aspects of heritage, such as festivals and events (Kim & Jamal, 2007); performances (Bruner, 2001) and traditional way of living (Lane & Waitt, 2001). Third, although there is much published information on visitation of Christian sacred sites (e.g. Andriotis, 2009; Dubisch, 1995), the concept of authenticity in the context of Christian pilgrimage remains peripheral, with most research (e.g. Shackley, 1998) focusing on congested Christian shrines turned into a commodity due to mass visitation.

Within the plethora of tourism research on authenticity, Belhassen, Caton & Stewart's (2008, p.668) work is among the limited attempts having explored Christian pilgrimage experience proposed a conceptual framework referred to as theoplacity which consists of three inter-related factors of pilgrims' authentic experiences namely, place, belief, and action. However, the most relevant to the current study research, was the study of Andriotis (2009) who identified five core elements of sacred site experience in the case of Mount Athos, namely spiritual; cultural; environmental; secular; and educational. The clear implication of Andriotis' study was the need to substantiate its findings by developing a more detailed theoretical discussion around authenticity and the ways authenticity affects sacred shrine experience. Following this call and bearing in mind that pilgrimage landscapes are composed of various components but most tourism scholars, e.g. Cohen (1988); Kim & Jamal (2007); Reisinger & Steiner (2006) have explored only unidimensional aspects of authenticity and no past research has taken a close look at Pine & Gilmore's (2007) genres of authenticity, namely natural, original, exceptional, referential, and influential, in a pilgrimage landscape context, it emerges that past research on authenticity has failed to study phenomena on the basis of facts and observations relevant to the testing of theories and frameworks by using alternative concepts found in disciplines other than those in the social sciences. However, if the aim is to clarify the main genres of authenticity for pilgrimage landscapes, there is a need for an integrated conceptual framework that combines theoretical and empirical evidence from disciplines, other than tourism. Taking as a case the self-ruled monastic state of Mount Athos (Northern Greece), the last surviving Byzantine complex of monasteries on holy mountains, operating under a charter granted in 972 by the emperor of Constantinople, the current study comes to address past research negligence on the complexity of authenticity by exploring the appeal of Pine & Gilmore's (2007) genres of authenticity in a pilgrimage landscape context and linking them to past research on pilgrimage experience.

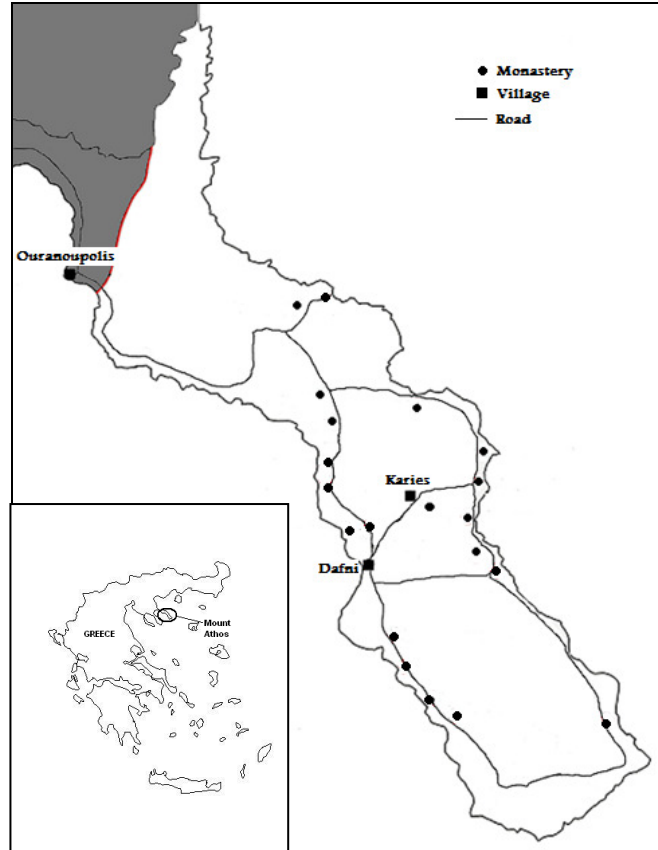
## **STUDY AREA AND METHODS**

The information, on which this paper is based, was gathered as a part of a much larger ongoing study taking place in Byzantine heritage sites located in Greece. The study, some of the findings of which have already been published (see Andriotis, 2009), has the goal of examining various aspects of experiencing Byzantine tourist attractions. This article focuses entirely on authenticity on the World Heritage Site of Mount Athos for three reasons. First, the author's personal interest and fascination with the place. Second, although during the last two decades some studies have been conducted about Orthodox sacred shrines, such as St. Katherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai, Egypt

(Shackley, 1998) and Mount Athos (Andriotis, 2009; Gothoni, 1993; Kotsi, 1999); these studies as well as research on non-religious Byzantine sites (e.g. Chronis, 2005, 2006) have paid little regard to the context authenticity plays to the study of experiencing Byzantine past. Third, while the monastic enclave of Athos is inevitably an environment where visitors can imagine and experience what the site has been like when Byzantine monasticism existed there, modernization has posed various threats to the authenticity of the shrine.

The ‘theocratic’ republic of Mount Athos is one of the world’s most renowned monastic communities and the principal centre of Byzantine monasticism for all the Eastern Orthodox Churches, subject to the spiritual jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. The 35 miles long peninsula is also a live monastic community of 2,300 Christian Orthodox monks and home to 20 Orthodox monasteries (Figure 1), built between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, and functioning as a live museum of history and art which opens up for outsiders who are permitted to view details of the inner operation (Andriotis, 2009). Following the Byzantine tradition, the Holy Mountain has a different time and date. Athonite monks follow the old Julian calendar (i.e. thirteen days behind the Gregorian) and the Byzantine time (at sunrise and sunset it is twelve o’clock and the time alters as the seasons change). To ensure the lack of collective gaze and foster a feeling among visitors that the shrine is natural and not threatened by the sight of tourists and the associated over-commercialization, limiting the number of entrances in Mount Athos is of vital importance. (For more details about access and admission to Mount Athos see Andriotis, 2009). In order to preserve the special purity of the monks from worldly distraction and sexual temptation, women are banned from the peninsula.

**Figure 1. The peninsula of Mount Athos**



To undertake the current research, the author travelled to Mount Athos four times (September 2004, May 2006, July 2007 and June 2010) during the last seven years. Each visit lasted from four to six days and involved one or two overnight stays in each of the 20 Athonite monasteries as well as travelling around the peninsula. Participant-observation guided data collection because it is the most appropriate method when the aim is to explore gaps in theory and/or observe events of substantive interest as they unfold, and observed practices of visitors as they evolve in particular sites (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002). Although in depth interviews with visitors to Mount Athos were performed due to word count limitation they have been reported elsewhere (see Andriotis, 2009). During each visit to the peninsula the author kept notes. In times where direct note-taking was not possible, e.g. during services in the church, there was reliance on memory, and notes were written as soon as possible. Although according to Gerson & Horowitz (2002, p.218) in participant observation, analysis and data collection are inseparably intertwined, there typically remains more to do after leaving the field. With respect to analysis and interpretation, all notes were turned into more coherent notes under the five main categories of authenticity proposed by Gilmore and Pine (2007). These genres, or for analytical purposes themes, were devised inductively, by identifying meaningful sub-themes. (The overarching concepts that emerged from this process are shown in Figure 2). To falsify the findings and support a more interpretive discourse in the notes by discovering exceptions to expected patterns on an observation-by-

observation basis and identify the nature of each genre of authenticity, observational data were interpreted by making inferences from the data and relying on relevant literature as a guide.

**Figure 2. Features of Genres of Authenticity**

Genres of Authenticity (Gilmore & Pine, 2007)	Characteristics (subthemes) of Genres of Religious Heritage Authenticity
Natural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscape</li> <li>• Flora &amp; Fauna</li> <li>• Accessibility</li> <li>• Number of visitors</li> <li>• Use of natural ingredients</li> </ul>
Original	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connection to past</li> <li>• Activities (e.g. ceremonial rituals)</li> <li>• Traditional lifestyle and daily duties (e.g. monks dresses, cooking)</li> <li>• Design, fabric and materials used in buildings' construction and artifacts (e.g. frescoes, gems, mosaics, icons and manuscripts)</li> <li>• Appearance of the furniture and ecclesiastic utensils</li> <li>• Social organization</li> </ul>
Exceptional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human interaction</li> <li>• Services provision (hospitality, homeliness)</li> <li>• Self-organization of trip</li> <li>• Production and selling of souvenirs</li> </ul>
Referential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Historical continuity and connection with past</b></li> <li>• <b>Commitment to traditional production processes (e.g. souvenirs and wine production)</b></li> <li>• <b>Sacred objects with sacred associations (e.g. icons, incense, rosaries, prayer ropes and amulets against the evil eye)</b></li> <li>• <b>Lack of commercialization</b></li> </ul>
Influential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceptual engagement and inner change</li> <li>• Communication and exchange of ideas with monks</li> <li>• Worship / services in the church</li> <li>• Nostalgia for the vanished past (e.g. search for historic roots and culture)</li> <li>• Influences to architecture and art</li> </ul>

## GENRES OF AUTHENTICITY

To overcome past research negligence identified in the previous section, Gilmore & Pine's genres of authenticity are explored in the case of the pilgrimage landscape of the Holly Mountain.

### ***Genre One: Natural authenticity***

*People tend to perceive as authentic that which exists in its natural state in or of the earth, remaining untouched by human hands; not artificial or synthetic (Gilmore & Pine, 2007, p.49).*

Whereas tourism literature in the majority of instances confines authenticity to socio-cultural and historical objects, and MacCannell (1973, cited by Wang) believes that “certain toured objects, such as nature, are in a strict sense irrelevant to authenticity” (1999, p.351), a more recent study by Cohen (1988, p.374) acknowledged the relationship of authenticity to nature by stating that the alienated contemporary tourists seek authentic natural or primitive experiences, untouched by modernity. Various other authors, e.g. DeLyser (1999); Lau (2010), found that authenticity is informed and influenced by natural elements. In a sacred site context, both heritage and religion are structured by physical features and thus natural landscape can provide an appropriate platform to study the interaction of tourists and pilgrims with the earth’s resources. In the case of the Holly Mountain, its undiluted ecosystem has accrued from natural processes. Although people have always molded the environment to fit their perfectly reasonable needs, the peninsula of Athos has kept a unique harmonious matching of built heritage and natural beauty, where natural systems have been self-organized with limited human intervention. As hunting is not allowed and the natural cover has been very little grazed, more than 90% of the peninsula is covered with forests, and the Mountain retains much of its natural authenticity (Speake, 2002).

For many sacred sites, the small amount of time it takes to bring tourists from built-up areas interspersed with hotels, restaurants, and souvenir shops catering almost exclusively to tourists, makes the landscape less pristine and disturbs travelers who seek rare experiences and spiritual loneliness. Traditionally, terrestrial pilgrimage offered communion with nature, through the participation of pilgrims in activities such as walking and trekking. Opposing to mechanical transport, which for some people violates the very essence of pilgrimage and erodes the cultural notions that have underpinned pilgrimage for centuries, pure pilgrims in the past performed a variety of healing rituals related to natural environmental site features involving climbing up steep slopes and walking (Bleie, 2003, p.180). In contrast to Byzantines who embarked on long and sometimes arduous and dangerous journeys to sacred sites to worship to God and to venerate holy relics and miracle-working icons (Greenfield, 2002), modern pilgrimage in Orthodox Christianity does not require physical endurance (Andriotis, 2009).

The fact that the ancient road which connects Mount Athos to the outside world has not opened for many years, means that access to the territory of Mount Athos is only possible by sea. Visitors who wish to enter the peninsula have to take a ferry from the small port of Ouranoupolis, or the second port of departure in Ierissos on the eastern side. This involves passing by spectacular natural settings that stand in stark contrast to the crowded noisy locations of many sacred sites. This “passage from the profane to the sacred” (Eliade, 1959, p.25), serves as a journey to the world of Byzantium as well as an initial signifier of natural authenticity. Athonite monks are opposed to carving wider and asphalted roads through the mountains in order to prevent the exposure of the shrine to mass visitation. As a result, access to the hagiomite monasteries is deliberately difficult and the place has been sheltered from the influences of the modern world that could ultimately diminish the special character of the place and change the meaning of



coenobium by derailing monks from hermetic and continual prayer. With the exception of a few miles of cement road in the vicinity of the port of Dafni and the administrative capital Karyes, throughout the Athonite state a primitive network of dirt roads exists which for most monasteries is the only access point. On the other hand, stone-paved footpaths surrounded by scenes of spectacular natural beauty, many of them centuries old, are for some visitors a delight to walk. Nevertheless, most visitors no longer ascend to monasteries on foot but prefer to move by using the monastic taxi service, and those who choose to walk “are often branded as romantics and laughed at for preferring the old route” (Speake, 2010, p.236).

Waller & Lea (1999) believe that large number of tourists inauthenticate the tourist experience. In Mount Athos during peak periods, especially in summer and around the time of major feasts, the demand is high. Nevertheless, control of admittance enhances authenticity, associated with small numbers of visitors, something illustrated in the photographs visitors take home with them. Although in Mount Athos photography is not permitted within the walls of most monasteries, it is customary to get a picture of the landscape or a building without any people to fill the camera’s field of view. In doing so, there is no need to wait for a long time to take a photo, as it is common today in many sacred sites.

### ***Genre Two: Original authenticity***

*People tend to perceive as authentic that which possesses originality in design, being the first of its kind, never before seen by human eyes; not a copy or imitation (Gilmore & Pine, 2007, p.49).*

Since tourism is structured by physical experiences (Spark, 2002), the built environment and the artefacts found in it are its tangible focus (Ryan & McKenzie, 2003, p.63). Thus, a number of empirical studies have attempted to identify visitors’ perceived authenticity of heritage settings and their exhibited artifacts (e.g. Waitt, 2000), and concluded that visitors to heritage sites seek for objective authenticity, a synonymous to Gilmore & Pine’s (2007) original authenticity.

*Objective authenticity involves a museum-linked usage of the authenticity of the originals that are also the toured objects to be perceived by tourists. It follows that the authentic experience is caused by the recognition of the toured objects as authentic ... Even though the tourists themselves think they have gained authentic experiences, this can, however, still be judged as inauthentic, if the toured objects are in fact false, contrived (Wang, 1999, p.351).*

In contrast to accurate reproductions of heritage, such as the reconstructed village and outdoor museum of New Salem in Illinois, where Abraham Lincoln lived in the 1830s (Bruner, 1994), which according to Leigh, Peters & Shelton (2006) renders an impression of iconic authenticity and bears “only a faint and extremely partial resemblance to past events as documented in various alternative sources” (Waitt, 2000, p.836), Athos is original and genuine. Its factual connection to Byzantine history and culture possess a degree of distinctiveness which offers what Grayson & Martinec (2004) call indexical authenticity. Paraphrasing Lau (2010, p.3), realness is found everything in Athos ranging from life processes (e.g. cooking; social organization), activities (e.g.

ceremonial rituals), artifacts (e.g. frescoes, gems, mosaics, icons and manuscripts), and so on, all of which command people's admiration.

Nevertheless, as happens with most denominations, religious change, and it would be impossible to expect Mount Athos not to resign to some types of change. As Speake writes, "nearly everything about Athos, even today, is Byzantine, but of course there have been ... ephemeral conveniences that enable monks to manage their lives and communicate with each other and with the world in a suitably pragmatic fashion" (2002, p.149). Despite changes, such as a lift in the monastery of Vatopedi and an electric door bell just inside the front gate of the monastery of Xyropotamou, nowhere else in the world can one find a whole mountain-peninsula harmonized with original Byzantine design and workmanship. Original authenticity in Mount Athos is ensured by not allowing new additions of buildings of modern concrete style to dominate over the original fabric. Even when contemporary materials and techniques are used to preserve or restore buildings and objects, in the majority of cases when the work is exposed in public eye, attempts are made to preserve a sense of the past by using historic or historic-style materials and techniques. Nonetheless, as Goulding (2000, p.837) reiterates even when the buildings, artefacts and costumes are authentic, the selective portrayal of events and histories in most heritage sites are tailored to pacify the tastes of the modern visitor. In contrast to other sacred sites where visitors pass through a monastery and not even see a monk, Mount Athos is characterized by a sense of local authenticity where monks and visitors come in contact and have the opportunity to live a traditional Byzantine lifestyle, unspoiled to a great extent by the ravages of external world (Andriotis, 2009, p.74). Although Athonite monks, unlike their lay counterparts, live their rigid daily routine within an ordered hierarchy, they share the space with guests while praying in the church or dine in the refectories. While both of these activities are practiced in silence, visitors have the chance to communicate and exchange ideas with the monks not only during confession but also in the evening after compline, as well as during monks' daily duties, where visitors are often being asked to help out. Taking under concern the work of Goffman (1959), Mount Athos can be considered originally authentic because visitors have access to the back regions of the monasteries and their inner operations that are ordinarily closed to outsiders. In this context, the environment and the life in the monasteries are not 'secrets' predestined to be known only to 'insiders'. As a posting in a discussion forum dedicated to the study of Orthodox Christianity mentions, "the life of Mount Athos is the most public life of the Church; it is the life of constant glorification of God. There is nothing secret or apocryphal in the way that this life is performed" (Anonymous, 2005). While monks carry on their everyday lives, visitors have the chance to step back in time and enter into an existential experience of unmeasured and uncontrolled time, or timeless (Andriotis, 2009, p.80). While in most tourist sites only those "being 'one of them,' or at one with 'them,' are permitted to penetrate the true inner workings of other individuals or societies" (MacCannell, 1973, p.592), Mount Athos, in line with the persistence of authenticity, allows to visitors some degree of participation in the way-of-life of the monks.

### ***Genre Three: Exceptional authenticity***

*People tend to perceive as authentic that which is done exceptionally well, executed individually and extraordinarily by someone demonstrating human care; not unfeelingly or disingenuously performed (Gilmore & Pine, 2007, p.49).*

Tourists' experience is enhanced when offerings are produced with human care and for a small set of identifiable and close-knit individuals. Hence, the process of human interaction is fundamental for rendering exceptional authenticity (Gilmore & Pine, undated, p.27). In an age of mass consumption, in which every item of culture becomes a commodity, the shift from personal service to self-service has attained increased popularity, and has an impact on the commercialization of the heritage experience. Thus, many travelers feel burdened by self-service and prefer human-provided services that cater to them on an individual-by-individual basis or in some extraordinary way (Gilmore & Pine, 2008). Human care in Mount Athos is a cherished tradition that goes back for centuries and monks play a pivotal role. The monasteries bespeak exceptional authenticity not only by retaining essential elements of tradition, but because everything, from crops cultivation, to meal production, spiritual enlightenment and ceremonial rituals, is done to personal service.

Hospitality has always been a part of the customary practice of Byzantine monasteries. For instance, in the eleventh century St. Lazaros of Galesion offered in a Byzantine monastery just outside Ephesus free hospitality and adequate food and drink to visitors, as a part of the duty of the monastery even in times of shortage (Greenfield, 2002). In Athos, each monastery boasts an archontarion where visitors are welcomed and a guest house where visitors can stay and sleep. Visitors in Mount Athos sleep in the dormitories of monasteries without en suite facilities and mod cons, such as fridge and coffee-making facilities. On their arrival at a monastery, visitors are offered by the archontaris (host to visitors), a traditional greeting of a glass of cold water, a piece of loukoumi (traditional sweet), and a shot of raki (a spirit used to be distilled throughout the Byzantine Empire). Meals are served by monks at an unadorned refectory where visitors and monks sit in silence, usually at separate ancient communal marble tables. Eating starts when the abbot strikes a bell, while a pulpit reads passages from the Bible aimed to elevate faith and action. Meals offered in Mount Athos are special, not only because they are made by natural ingredients and prepared in the same way as hundreds of years ago, a fact that also ensures natural authenticity, but because they are served by monks on a straightforward and unassuming way. In contrast to the restaurants of most heritage sites where waiting staff dressed in black and white serves Western food, such as hamburger, spaghetti, pizza and ice-cream, meals in Mount Athos are ascetic, a clean diet that people once ate across the eastern Mediterranean.

The time available for sightseeing is also a causal factor in experiencing exceptional authenticity. Those visiting shrines on guided-tour with a fixed itinerary rush from monastery to monastery to visit the must-see sites. As a result, they have less time to obtain personal service. In Mount Athos large and organized groups are not encouraged, because they can disturb the monastic peace and the difficulty for monasteries to accommodate them (Speake, 2010, p.242). The fact that visitors to Mount Athos have to spend the nights in the monasteries offers them the opportunity to absorb the atmosphere of the place rather than rush about from site to site. At some monasteries,

history and religious talks are initiated by well-educated monks who, not dissimilar to tour guides, provide free of charge, information about the history, architecture and nature. In addition, monks offer a primer in hesychastic theology, explaining the importance of repentance, prayer, fasting and celibacy (Gilson, 2006). During such talks, often taking the form of long group discussions, participants are able to ask various questions and have an experience of educative nature.

Consumers attribute meaning to objects through joint interactions with sellers (Zaidman, 2003, p.356). Although authentic experiences can be achieved through some degree of contact between the local sellers and visitors within a heritage setting (Moscardo & Pearce, 1986), the heavy workload in overcrowded sites or the lack of knowledge for objects on sale by sellers, results in giving little information to buyers. In fact, in many sacred sites shopkeepers are employed lay workers. In the monasteries of Mount Athos all shops are run by monks, who are ready to provide information about the religious articles and their meaning and function. The non-commercial nature of such transactions contributes to the perceived authenticity of religious souvenirs (Shi, 2009). The fact that religious souvenirs sold in shops come directly from the monasteries, without intermediaries, also gives them a unique character (Kotsi, 2007, p.14). Even when they are being manufactured outside the shrine, the fact they are sold within the borders of monasteries, makes them to be perceived as more authentic compared to those sold in shops outside. Their value also increases by being closer to the sacred reality and by having been authenticated by monks' blessing (Kotsi, 1999; Shi, 2009). All these attributes make people to believe that such religious objects possess supernatural powers. As one monk of Mount Athos put it, "the rosary that is made in Mount Athos has more value. It is made by the monks in the monasteries with a lot of patience and prayer. It is blessed. The rosary that one buys in a souvenir shop also has its value, but it is of a different nature" (Kotsi, 1999, p.15). In some way the authenticity of religious souvenirs sold by monasteries is not always enhanced when they are handmade by local ingredients. This is explained by Kotsi (1999, p.15) who mentions that although the ingredients of the incense made in Mount Athos are artificial and chemical, imported from France, the fact they are mixed in Mount Athos and the incense is delivered personally by monks, made a woman taking a floating pilgrimage to Mount Athos to believe it smells like nothing else in the world. In the imagination of this woman, monks pick flowers which do not exist elsewhere and mix them in a natural way by using secret recipes (Kotsi, 1999).

#### ***Genre Four: Referential authenticity***

*People tend to perceive as authentic that which refers to some other context, drawing inspiration from human history, and tapping into our shared memories and longings; not derivative or trivial (Gilmore & Pine, 2007, p.50).*

Beverland (2005, p.1025) identified as main determinant of referential authenticity sincerity, which can be explored from three main perspectives: the use of a place and its history and culture as referents; commitment to traditional production processes; and appealing above commercial considerations. Mount Athos conforms to all three aspects of sincerity, by generating linkages to the Byzantine past in a traditional and non-commercial way. It is referential authentic, because it features the world's largest

selection of Byzantine ‘one-of-a-kind timepieces’ and offers a human history focused on shared memories and longings of the Byzantine rite. It functions as a historic theme site and according to Gilmore & Pine (undated) all historical theme sites are by definition referential. In contrast to the accounts of Moscardo & Pearce (1986) for two Australian historic theme parks which preserve only some aspects of a region’s heritage, Mount Athos has taken over an ancient schedule, representing the Byzantine rite. It does not imitate, reproduce or trivialize a theme site, but conveys a sense of history, proving its historical continuity and connection with Byzantium through the existence of buildings, furniture, ecclesiastic utensils, objects of everyday usage and priceless relics. Thus, visitors can gain the perception of referential authenticity by simply visiting the site.

Reisinger & Steiner support that “products, such as works of art, artifacts, cuisine, or rituals are usually described as authentic or inauthentic depending on whether they are made or performed by locals according to their traditions” (2006, p. 68). Tourists tend to buy souvenirs, religious or not, as enhancers of personal experiences and as tangible evidence of having found the authentic (Littrell, Anderson & Brown, 1993). Thus, pilgrimage has inspired the development of elaborate commercial activity (Zaidman, 2003). Dubisch believes that the Christian Orthodox faith is highly visible “in the sense that it is represented in a variety of material objects: the votive offerings and icons, and the many prophylactic objects that are used to protect valued property and persons from harm” (1990, p.130). This material manifestation of Orthodox religiosity is, according to Andriotis (2009), evident in Mount Athos through the tangible objects being bought by visitors. As it was the case during the Byzantine times, contemporary pilgrims to Mount Athos, bring back home sacred objects with sacred associations often carrying images of saints. These sacred objects are sold in the shops which many monasteries run just inside their front gates. However, Mount Athos is not the kind of place where visitors can find souvenirs, such as t-shirts, household textiles, bracelets and necklaces, but where they buy objects with sacred associations, such as icons, incense, rosaries, prayer ropes and amulets against the evil eye, all of which capture the essence of the place or memories of it. Despite some exceptions, many of these items are referentially authentic not only because they are sold by monks dressed in black monastic garbs, but because they are hand-made using natural ingredients and traditional processes closely related to Byzantine art. In opposition to machine age materialism, most processes and techniques in Mount Athos are dedicated to traditional methods. While goods and services in many, if not all, heritage sites become commoditized, in Mount Athos many religious objects are produced by monks who take great care and effort to create a piece of work to be appreciated by visitors.

Another means of portraying referential authenticity is that Athonite monks are true to their selves. They are not performing for an audience, but rituals and ceremonies draw their inspiration from the long-standing Byzantine culture. Visitors cannot be untouched by the fact that events and rituals go through motions entirely related to the heritage and customary way of monks’ life. The deliberate decoupling of day-to-day operations and the hospitality offered to visitors is above commercial considerations. Although many monasteries outside Mount Athos accept paying guests, who seek an unusual lodging to ‘experience’ a historical tradition (Smith, 1992), visitors to Mount Athos pay a standard entrance fee of 32 USD (25 Euros) which entitles to four days stay, including lodging and meals. Thus, the site is opposed to commercialism and is perceived

to be authentic because it offers an illustration of the truth rather than ‘commodification of the history’ (Barthel, 1996). This absence of commoditization is, according to Cohen (1988), a crucial consideration in judgments of authenticity. As Speak vividly explains, Mount Athos “provides a viable alternative to the rapidly spreading materialism and secularism of modern society, an alternative that is clearly much needed and much appreciated by large numbers of men, be the monks or pilgrims” (2005, p.267).

### ***Genre Five: Influential authenticity***

*People tend to perceive as authentic that which exerts influence upon other entities, calling human beings to a higher goal and providing a foretaste of a better way; not inconsequential or without meaning (Gilmore & Pine, 2007, p.50).*

In appealing to influential authenticity the question is whether Mount Athos can change or influence visitors for the better? Mount Athos is called the ‘Garden of the Panaghia’. It is dedicated to people as a gift of God and is also under the special protection of the Virgin Mary. The spirituality offered by the place and monks generates magnetism on peoples’ consciousness and allows visitors a perceptual engagement and inner change. This spirituality is enhanced during church services; about six hours a day are devoted to them, consisting almost entirely of chanting. For many religious motivated visitors, the main reason for visiting the shrine is to listen to esteemed monks, identified as having a ‘charisma’, or to talk to their father confessor. Mount Athos is an engaging place which allows pilgrims to worship away from the cares and distractions of everyday lives, to derive spiritual sustenance, to experience personal transformation and to express their devotedness to God. For those searching for a different or new direction in life, Mount Athos gives the feeling they have been reborn, and offers them the opportunity to see the world through different eyes (Gothoni, 1993). Moreover, visitors of all sorts flock to the holy mountain hoping to be cured of diseases and physical illness, to be freed from the ‘demons’ that torment them or to seek spiritual wisdom, blessing, and practical advice. An informative example of the religiosity of the place comes from those visitors who place religious items, such as string of beads and crosses on saints’ sacred bones because they believe they serve as a medium to transfer the saint’s blessing, and to provide cure of an illness, disability or pain.

People searching for influential authenticity are based upon feelings of nostalgia for the vanished past, a search for their historic roots and for an imagined time when life was more natural, purer, and simpler (Bruner, 1994, p.411). Saturated with artifacts of Byzantine history, visitors to Mount Athos are nostalgic about their Byzantine past. As Moscardo & Pearce explain “historical settings are important to travelers (in particular, domestic travelers) because they can heighten an appreciation of the flow of time and give insight into the social life of the past” (1986, p.471). Thus, Mount Athos provides to visitors a prism through which to view the Byzantine convent and reflects an appreciation of values that need to be preserved and transmitted to subsequent generations. This is more evident for Greeks which constitute the overwhelming majority of visitors. As Chronis (2005, p.215) articulates there are remarkable similarities between life in the Byzantine years and contemporary Greek life. This connection between Byzantines and modern Greece makes Greek visitors to argue for a manifestation of historical continuity and discovery of their roots.

As Chronis so incisively narrates “the unique architectural forms, the virtuosity in subtlety of design, and the refinement of detail made Byzantine one of the great architecture schools during the medieval ages” (2006, p.270-271). The Byzantine architecture, profoundly expressed in the monasteries, is widely admired among the western artistic conventions of the Byzantine period, and creates an authentic environment which visitors seek (Kotsi, 1999, p.11). The monasteries of Athos have attracted Byzantine artists and craftsmen, whose glorious work can be admired in many of the monasteries (Speake, 2002, p.8). Nowhere else can be found such an accumulation of objects of Byzantine religious art. The buildings, objects and icons Mount Athos hosts, have influenced and will continue to influence the architecture and the art of painting of many Western countries. As Chronis points out in the context of a Byzantine heritage exhibition in Salonica (Greece), “the past is beneficial because of the lessons it teaches” (2005, p.214). This is evidenced frequently in Mount Athos. For instance, Speake talks about one father in one skete (monastic village subordinated to a ruling monastery) who “has the reputation of producing icons according to traditional Byzantine principles” (2002, p.225). This father is visited by students of iconography and art from all over the world who are being accommodated in his well-equipped and hospitable cell in order to learn his techniques.

## CONCLUSION

This study used observational data to introduce Gilmore & Pine’s (2007) genres of authenticity to sociological studies and to explore this coherent analytical framework in the context of the pilgrimage landscape of Mount Athos. In line with the study of Belhassen, Caton & Stewart the main finding of this study is that in the case of pilgrimage authenticity specific features of the landscape “are essential to legitimize the experience of the trip, to enhance one’s identity with the place, and to validate one’s religious ideology. Without witnessing such features, the search for authenticity is lost” (2008, p.673). Thus, in understanding the concept of pilgrimage authenticity two main perspectives are of vital importance, the components (features) of the pilgrimage landscape and visitors’ experiences. For this reason the findings of this study are discussed in relation to these two perspectives.

From the perspective of the components of pilgrimage landscapes, sacred sites can be seen as the product of multiple discourses. Through the review of the five genres of authenticity, it was evident that Mount Athos has all the components reported in the literature for heritage sites. Thus, in order to understand the meaning of authenticity in Mount Athos, as well as in other pilgrimage landscapes individual components, as those presented in Figure 2, help to identify their relationships and to reduce the complexity of the concept of pilgrimage authenticity. In addition, it is evident that some of the components under study fall into different genres. For instance, meals offered in Mount Athos may be considered of natural and referential authenticity, because they are made by natural ingredients and by traditional recipes and processes, but also of exceptional and original authenticity because of the way and the place they are being served. Thus, the five genres of authenticity are not mutually exclusive but can be interrelated with each other.

From the perspective of experiences, Gilmore & Pine’s genres of authenticity can be also used as a useful framework to explore aspects of authenticity of pilgrimage

experience. Among the main findings of this study are that although the concepts explored by Gilmore and Pine have been developed in consumer research they are also pertinent to the study of authentic pilgrimage experience. In more detail, the review undertaken in this study makes evident that all five genres of authenticity apply to Mount Athos in such a way that visitors can regard the place as authentic. Although Gilmore & Pine state, “it is very difficult to be so purely natural as to be perceived as innately wild, so purely original as to be perceived as the one and only, so purely exceptional as to be perceived as perfectly executed, so purely referential as to be perceived as reverently begotten, or so purely influential as to be perceived as profoundly meaningful” (2008), all these are evident in the case of Mount Athos. First, the peninsula implies natural authenticity because it is an extraordinary natural phenomenon which has not been extensively modified and contaminated through contact with the modern world. Paraphrasing Belhassen, Caton & Stewart (2008), since pilgrimage is a spatial activity, the natural unspoilt beauty and complexity of the shrine plays an important role that cannot be abandoned in conceptualizations of pilgrimage experiences. Thus, Andriotis’ (2009) environmental element of sacred site experience pertains and complements the implied concept of natural authenticity. Second, Mount Athos portrays original authenticity because it is an authentic original site, which has not been constructed for tourist consumption, as those heritage attractions which have lost their credibility due to mass visitation and the associated overcommercialization. In line with the objectivist approach of authenticity which assumes that authenticity emanates from the originality of a site (Belhassen, Caton & Stewart, 2008), Mount Athos is inspired by originality in architecture, heritage, and rituals, all of which can be equated to Andriotis’ cultural element of sacred site experience. Taking into consideration Lau’s (2010) senses, Mount Athos belongs to sense (e) because it is original, but not to sense (f) which refers to a good reproduction that meets certain conditions. Third, the Holy Mountain bespeaks exceptional authenticity because of the presence of monks and the communal way of life and the fact that everything, from rituals to hospitality, are offered personally with human care by monks. The persistence of authenticity in Mount Athos is derived from the day-to-day interaction between monks and visitors and their mutually constructed and shared impressions, which are overwhelmed in visitors’ experience in the form of Andriotis’ secular and spiritual elements of sacred site experience. Fourth, the peninsula employs according to Lau’s (2010) sense (a) referential authenticity through ‘complete sincerity without feigning or hypocrisy’. This sincerity is evident because the material landscape refers to a lost culture which reinforces its relationship to Byzantium by the historical continuity and connection with its past, by the material manifestation of Orthodox religiosity and the construction of a landscape where monks do everything according to the tradition without expecting economic gain. All these generate feelings associated with the cultural and intuitively spiritual elements of Andriotis’ sacred site experience. Finally, Mount Athos is a sacred site completely dedicated to prayer and worship of God where a different nature of activities are performed sanctified by the homilies of monks, out-of-class learning, and personal growth and development, all of which add according to Andriotis’ educational and spiritual elements to the experience and offer the possibility of changing or influencing humanity for the better. The fact that Mount Athos is of ultimate significance not only for Orthodoxy, but also for the humanity as a whole enhances influential authenticity.



In the face of commercial pressures, Mount Athos is different in that it has not been developed with the intention of providing a landscape for 'sale' and 'consumption'. Instead, it is among the limited pilgrimage activities worldwide, which are zero for profit. Authenticity has been kept in Mount Athos because the territory is not subjected to the influence of the local governments and their pressures to exploit it for economic gains or with other political agenda, as happens in most sacred destinations (for example, see Joseph & Kavoori, 2001). However, the study of any sacred site is the study of objective authenticity from the believer's point of view (Belhassen, Caton & Stewart, 2008, p.686) and authenticity is a cultural construction based on self-judgment. Thus, an individual's perception of authenticity occurs through a filter of personal thoughts and experiences of visitors. In addition, as Wang so incisively indicated, objects may "appear authentic not because they are inherently authentic but because they are constructed as such in terms of points of view, beliefs, perspectives, or powers" (1999, p. 351). As a result, it emerges that there are certain objective criteria which entail pilgrim's subjective perceptions. As Collins-Kreiner reports, "it is now clear that each person may interpret his or her own experience differently, and that it is no longer sufficient to focus solely on the experience offered by the objective. In this way, current pilgrimage research emphasizes subjectivity." (2010, p.448). Further research is required to investigate pilgrims' subjective and objective perceptions of the authenticity of their experiences.

To conclude, a detailed scrutiny of the concept of authenticity shows that it has been insufficiently developed in the tourism literature. In this study, an attempt was made to address this shortfall by using concepts developed in consumer research. The genres of authenticity explored in this study and their association with the components and the experiences of pilgrims are expected to provide theoretical foundation for further research and practical guidance which can certainly have applicability to other pilgrimage landscapes. Moreover, Gilmore & Pine's integrated framework has certainly applicability beyond the study of pilgrimage landscapes. Certainly, there is more work to be done in understanding the specific components of heritage landscapes and the ways these landscapes produce authenticity. Thus, further research is needed to replicate the findings of this study and extend them by identifying additional sources of heritage authenticity, which can provide the basis for a more comprehensive view for the understanding of the concept. While according to Hicks, research "proceeds better through structure comparisons of cases that differ on the values of their outcome variables than it does through a succession of single-case studies" (1994, p.90), most past studies on heritage authenticity offer limited spatial context of the cases drawn upon by focusing on isolated cases. Thus, it would be useful to verify the extent of comparison of this study's findings through parallel studies within other heritage sites, in order to examine whether the same patterns of authenticity and the associated elements of sacred site experience described for Mount Athos, apply elsewhere. Although due to various limitations the current study did not present primary data from visitors to Mount Athos, it is essential future research to incorporate samples of visitors of other heritage landscapes in order to empirically determine the relevance of the five genres of authenticity in travelers' experiences.

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